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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000651

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [XA](#) [AG](#) [CD](#) [CM](#) [KE](#) [MP](#) [MR](#) [ML](#) [NI](#) [SF](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: MOROCCO IN AFRICA: FM REACHES OUT ON SAHARA

REF: A. A. RABAT 0469

[1](#)B. B. RABAT 0625

Classified By: PolCouns Craig Karp. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Taib Fassi-Fihri's spent early summer lobbying Sub-Saharan African countries, mostly on Western Sahara. From 19 to 23 June, the minister visited four Sub Saharan countries and he worked the corridors of the African Union,s (AU) summit meeting in Sharm-El Sheikh, Egypt from 29 June to 1 July. According to the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director of African Affairs Abdellatif Bendahane, the minister,s efforts bore mixed results. In Kenya, he solidified the shift of Kenya to the Moroccan point of view and in Cameroon he won a positive, but weak, statement from the Central African Heads of State. In Niger, he sought inclusion in a regional security conference. At the AU summit, the FM pushed for a strong stance on Zimbabwe.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Roadshow

[1](#)2. (C) From 19 to 23 June, Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Taib Fassi-Fihri and head of Moroccan intelligence Mohamed Yassine Mansouri travelled to Niger, Kenya, Mauritius and Cameroon. With the exception of Niger, the visits focused on gathering support for the Moroccan position on Western Sahara, the driving principle for most Moroccan activities in Sub-Saharan Africa (reftel A). In Kenya, where recognition of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was frozen on 26 June 2007, the Minister met with counterparts to continue to encourage Kenya's stance regarding the SADR. In Mauritius, which recognized SADR in June 1982, the Minister lobbied for a change in the Mauritian policy, which is likely to be announced in the near future, following on a similar change from the Seychelles.

[1](#)3. (C) Fassi-Fihri used his travel to Cameroon to attend a heads of state meeting of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), composed of Cameroon, Gabon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Congo and discussed political ties and bilateral issues. At the end of the conference, CEMAC issued a statement on the Western Sahara calling for continued support of the UN's framework, while welcoming Morocco's autonomy plan as a starting point for future negotiations. Although the statement was a small diplomatic victory for Morocco, Bendahane expressed disappointment in the weakness of the declaration's language.

¶4. (C) The first stop on the Minister's trip, in Niamey, Niger, he sought Nigerien assistance securing an invitation from Mali to attend a counter-terrorism information-sharing meeting in Bamako with Algeria, Chad, Libya, Niger, Mauritania and possibly Burkina Faso. The meeting will focus on Tuareg unrest and extremist activities of al-Qa'ida in the Maghreb. Moroccan efforts have yet to produce an invitation to the conference, their participation allegedly blocked by Algeria (reftel B).

Engagement at the African Union Summit

¶5. (SBU) The only country on the African continent abstaining from membership in the African Union (AU), because of the AU's admission of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), Morocco did not participate in the AU's Sharm-El Sheikh conference in Egypt. However; in a bold, but unusual step likely facilitated by the host Egyptians, the Minister worked the corridors of the conference. He sought principally to gather support for Morocco's Sahara policy and also to express displeasure regarding Zimbabwe's recent election. Morocco, who is at odds with Zimbabwe over their support for the POLISARIO, communicated the message, &We condemn the elections in Zimbabwe, we condemn Mugabe directly, he is anti-democratic, and is bad for Africa.8 The Minister's presence in Sharm-El Sheikh also served to counter POLISARIO lobbying efforts in the context of the summit.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: According to Moroccan information, 21

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African countries recognize SADR, eight recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the territory, with the remaining countries maintaining a neutral stance. Though some countries have vacillated with their support for either cause, Morocco seems to be gaining momentum with small African states with the recent freezing of relations between the Seychelles and SADR in March and the imminent change in position of Mauritius. Several interlocutors though have expressed doubts about further progress as Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia, regional powers on the continent all recognize, and some of them provide support to, the SADR. End Comment.

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